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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts primarily to establish the guidelines of a reference framework for studying educational inequality as it relates to ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic divisions within society. In his analysis, the author focuses mainly on inequality between different socio-occupational categories. The discussion is organized in two major sections. Section 1 is a study of the mechanism of inequality, based mainly on French statistical data, and section 2 is an analysis of explanatory factors that create and maintain educational inequalities. Because the analysis model is based mainly on research in western countries, it is pointed out that the model may be of limited value in studying educational inequality in other societies with different social systems. (JG)

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No. 62 THE SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF PUPILS AND INEQUALITY IN EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

by Gabriel Carron

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THE SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF PUPILS AND INEQUALITY IN EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

by

Gabriel Carron

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CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
I. THE MECHANISMS OF INEQUALITY	3
II. EXPLANATORY FACTORS	15
CONCLUDING REMARKS	26

INTRODUCTION

Investigators in several countries have reported on the question of inequality in educational opportunities.

The most extensive and probably the best known of these was carried out in the United States by the Coleman team (1964-1966), to which the government of the United States assigned the task of studying the problem of "the inequalities of educational opportunities for individuals as a result of their race, colour, religion or national origin."

Between 1950 and 1970 an impressive body of enquiry and research was undertaken in the United Kingdom. In particular the reports of Mr. Banks (1955), Mrs. Floud and her co-workers (1956), Mrs. Fraser (1959) and Mr. Douglas (1964), should be mentioned as well as such official reports as: Early Leaving (1954), the Crowther Report (1959), the Robins Report (1965), the Newson Report (1963) and the Plowden Report (1967), etc.

In France the most considerable study was carried out at the 'Institut d'Etudes Démographiques' (Institute for Demographic Studies) Mr. Girard and his co-workers, who followed the progress of a body of 17,500 pupils for the ten years following their leaving primary school in 1962. This research has led to a better understanding of the psychological, family and social mechanisms entering into the orientation of young people during a particularly important stage in their development.

In Sweden the impact of the school reform on equality of opportunity has been the subject of a number of studies, those by Mr. Husén (1968) deserving particular mention.

Where developing countries are concerned data is far less abundant. As regards the African continent, two remarkable studies, one by Mr. Foster in Ghana (1965) and one by Messrs. Clignet and Foster in the Ivory Coast (1966), must be mentioned.

In 1971 the I.B.E. published an annotated bibliography on the subject of "Social background of students and their chance of success at school".

The long list of works to be found in this bibliography might give the impression that we are already well acquainted with the various aspects of the of the problem. This is unfortunately not so, for, while it has been possible to identify some of the correlations between a given social stratification

on the one hand and participation in education and school results on the other, the mediating processes between these two sets of data still largely escape us.

Consequently, the aim of this paper is not to summarize the incomplete results of the investigations mentioned above (it would be both difficult and dangerous to attempt to generalise in this field) but rather to draw up the guidelines of a reference framework in which to study the question of inequality. For examples we shall mainly draw on statistical data concerning France and a few other countries.

Inequalities in educational opportunity can take as many forms as there are divisions in society : inequalities between regional groups, between rural and urban zones, between socio-occupational categories, between ethnic, racial, linguistic or religious groups and between the sexes. It is easy to understand that the relative importance of each of these factors varies according to the social milieu and the level of education under consideration.

This analysis will deal primarily with inequality between socio-occupational categories(1); this is firstly for practical reasons, but also and in fact essentially because this form of inequality defines one of the main aspects of the problem under discussion. This form of inequality is very often superimposed on other types of inequality of a racial, religious, regional etc. kind and, as it characterises the family environment better than the other variables, it plays a central part in the explanation of inequalities in educational success.

This analysis of inequality in educational opportunities basically consists of three parts:

1. A study of the mechanisms of inequality based on statistical data;
2. An analysis of explanatory factors;
3. Reflections on likely means of achieving equalisation of educational opportunities.

This paper will only deal with the first two of these parts.

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(1) We shall not enter into the problems related to drawing up a socio-occupational classification and to translating the notion of a category or social class into a measure of the school environment. For a brief review of this subject, see : T. Husén, Social Background and Educational Career, Paris, O.E.C.D., 1972, pp. 18-23.

I. MECHANISMS OF INEQUALITY

1. The need for a dynamic approach

Inequality in educational opportunities is often considered from a statistical point of view. It can be said that in France, for instance, pupils coming from the upper classes (managerial staff, professionals, industrialists, senior managerial staff) account for 43% of the total number enrolled in higher education, while pupils coming from the lower classes (agricultural workers, farmers, industrial workers) only account for 24%; or again that at the end of secondary schooling in Senegal, 70% of the pupils come from the traditional sector (figure for 1963).

This kind of information is interesting but incomplete. It runs the risk of giving the impression that inequality in education is no more than a problem of the unequal distribution of school places due to social demand varying from one social category to another. Reducing the problem of inequality to a problem of social demand is current in a certain kind of writing on this subject. Reality is, however, far more complex. We know that even if if the sons of workers wished to participate in higher education in the same proportion as the sons of senior managerial staff do, and even if they had the financial means to do so, they would not be successful because the very way in which the school system operates systematically puts them at a disadvantage.

First and foremost, then, it is this mode of operation which must be studied, by applying a dynamic approach which is not solely concerned with results but above all with the process and mechanisms which determined these results.

2. The process

If schooling is taken as a system, it can then be said that inequality is an involuntary consequence of the educational process, at the end of which the proportions of the various sub-totals in the breakdown of enrolments have been considerably changed or even inverted.

The following graph illustrates this phenomenon in France. It compares the socio-professional breakdown of a body of pupils finishing primary school with the breakdown of the residue of the same body at university.(1)

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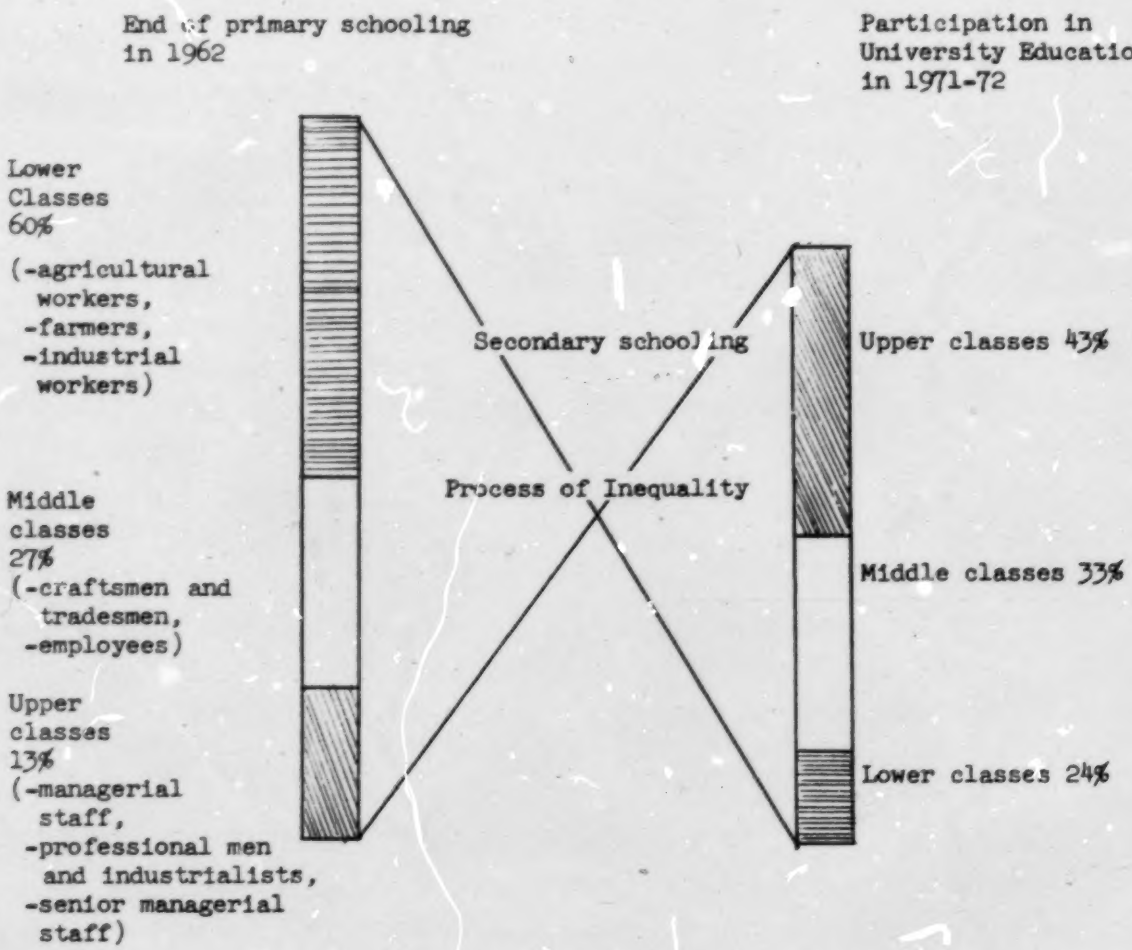
(1) Figures calculated from the investigation by Girard, A. and Bastide, H., "De la fin des études élémentaires à l'entrée dans la vie professionnelle ou à l'université. La marche d'une promotion de 1962 à 1972", in Population, Paris, INED, no. 3, May-June, 1973, pp. 571-593.

It can be seen that children of the lower classes account for 60% of those finishing primary schooling in 1962, still represent 24% of the students enrolled in university in 1971-72, whereas the percentage of children from the upper classes rose from 13% to 43%, while that of children from the middle classes remained fairly stable at approximately 30%.

Graph 1.


End of primary schooling in 1962
Participation in University Education in 1971-72
Lower Classes 60%
(-agricultural workers, -farmers, -industrial workers)
Middle classes 27%
(-craftsmen and tradesmen, -employees)
Upper classes 13%
(-managerial staff, -professional men and industrialists, -senior managerial staff)
Secondary schooling
Process of Inequality
Upper classes 43%
Middle classes 33%
Lower classes 24%

The ways in which inequalities arise as a result of poor interaction between the school system and its environment can be pinpointed and examined at various stages of the process:

a. at the level of entry into the school system, then in terms of participation in each level of schooling until school leaving (inequality of participation).
b. at the time of transition from one level of schooling to another (inequality of transition).

c. on the level of orientation towards various streams (inequality of orientation).

d. when progressing within the same level of schooling (inequality of success).

3. Means of measurement

Each of these inequalities, as well as the relationships between them, can be statistically measured. Without going into detail, the following are some of the means of measurement most frequently used.

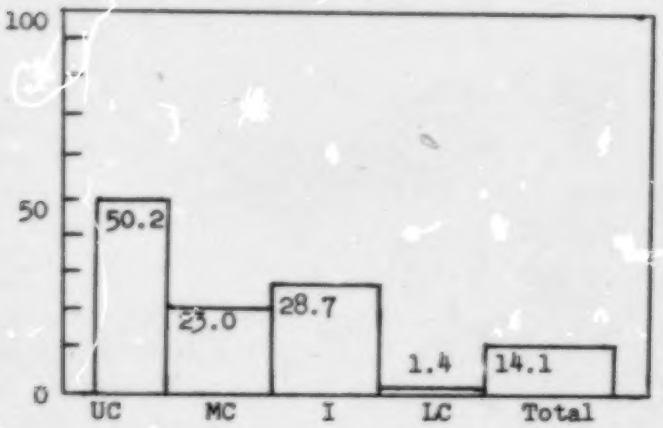
a. -Inequality of participation in a given level of education is measured by comparing the participation rates (or enrolment probabilities) of the various social groups to be studied. The rate of participation is the ratio between the total number of the school-attending population and the total number of the population considered to be of school age.

When dealing with social groups, it is sometimes difficult to know the total number of young people of school age belonging to the various different groups. The active male population belonging to each group is then taken as the approximative denominator, or, better still, the active married population considered to be of the age of the fathers of the young people under consideration. As fertility rates vary according to social category, an additional refinement is to weigh the number of the supposed fathers in each social category by the average number of children per man in the same group.

The following graph gives a concrete example of different rates of participation in higher education according to social background in Germany, for the year 1964-65. These are rather crude rates, calculated on the basis of the overall active male population. The graph does however give us some sense of a scale on which to compare the probabilities of enrolment in education of the different social groups. It indicates that the probability recorded for the upper classes is approximately twice that of the middle classes and approximately 35 times higher than that of the lower classes.

Number of students for 1000 active males belonging to the same socio-economic categories

Germany 1964-65(1)



UP = Upper classes (civil servants : university graduates and others)

MC = Middle classes (employees ; university graduates and others)

I = Independents (farmers and other independent workers)

LC = Lower classes (workers)

-Inequalities of participation can also be expressed through selectivity indices (or parity ratios). These indices are obtained by calculating the ratio between the percentage representing the pupils of a given social category and the percentage representing the school-age population of the same category. This index reveals the extent to which (in terms of school attendance) a social group is over-represented, under-represented or equally represented (its value is then 1.0) in comparison with its relative importance in society. Calculating this ratio meets with the same problems as those mentioned in connection with the rate of participation.

(1) O.E.C.D., Group Disparities in Educational Participation and Achievement, Paris, O.E.C.D., 1970 (Conference on Policies for Educational Growth, Paris, 3-5 June, Vol. IV).

Table 1, given below, provides a concrete example of this type of index as used in the study on Niger undertaken by the Institut d'Etude du Développement Economique et Social (IEDES : Institute for the Study of Economic and Social Development) of the University of Paris.(1)

Table 1. Occupations of the active male population of Niger and of the fathers of the pupils in 6th class (1st year of secondary schooling) in 1966-67
- Results in percentages and selectivity indices

Numbers / Professions and Occupations	I(1) Active male population (+ 14 years)	II Boys %	II/I	III Girls %	III/I	IV Together %	IV/I
Agriculture	95.8	60.4	0.6	30.2	0.3	53.8	0.6
Traditional occupations	0.9	2.7	2.9	0.9	1.0	2.3	2.5
Craft trades - small shop owners	1.8	7.9	4.4	7.1	4.3	7.8	4.3
Industry - construction	0.4	3.1	8.7	2.8	7.9	3.1	8.5
Transport - distributive trades	0.4	3.7	8.9	6.1	14.6	4.2	10.0
Public sector - professions	0.7	22.2	31.7	49.8	71.2	28.7	41.0
	100.0	100.0		100.0		100.0	
Number of replies	697.488	767		212		979	

(1) Source : Insee-Coopération survey 1960 and Niamey census, 1960.

(1) I.E.D.E.S., Les rendements de l'enseignement du premier degré en Afrique Francophone, volume V : Scolarité primaire et accès au second degré, enquête au Niger et au Sénégal, Paris, IEDES, 1967, p. 108.

Here again the index, based on the active male population of over 14 years of age, has scarcely been refined and merely gives some order of magnitude. Furthermore the demographic data refer to 1960 while the school data refer to 1966-67. There is no doubt that the socio-occupational breakdown changed between these dates, mainly along the lines of an increase in the public sector. The selectivity index for this sector should thus not be as high as that given in the table. However, the data do show, that, even in a young and very mobile society, such as that in Niger, the father's occupation already plays an important part in determining educational opportunities. For, although the traditional sector is still and by far the most broadly represented at the level of the first year of secondary schooling (53.8%), the selectivity index of the public sector and professions is very high (41.0). A more detailed analysis according to sex further reveals that this socio-occupational selection is far more strict for girls than it is for boys. For instance, while a boy from the traditional sector has approximately 52 times less chance of entering secondary schooling than a boy from the public sector and professions, (i.e. a ratio of 0.6 to 31.7), for a girl the negative chances are of the order of 237 (i.e. a ratio of 0.3 to 71.2).

b. Inequality of transition from one level of schooling to another can be expressed by the transition rate (or transition probabilities). The transition rate corresponds to the ratio between the number of pupils in a given class (or the graduates of any given level) and the number of pupils (or of certificates awarded) in a lower class and in a previous period for the same cohort of children. The advantage of this means of measurement is that it depends only on the school data. The main difficulty lies in establishing a true cohort.

Moreover this method does not take into account the fact that success rates vary from one social group to another. There is consequently an advantage in keeping the success factor constant so as to distinguish the influence of the actual transition variable.

A concrete example of this rate is given further in Graph 2.

c. Inequality of orientation can be calculated in the same way as the transition rate simply by distinguishing the various streams at a same level of transition. A concrete example of the orientation rate can be found on page 12, Table 3.

d. The simplest means of measuring inequality of success are well known : repetition rates, school backwardness rates, drop-out rates, school success rates or test performance rates.

Examples of the use of some of these rates are given on page 10, Table 2.

4. Mechanisms

Let us now examine how this inequality process, which is so characteristic of the running of our present school systems, operates. To illustrate this theoretical analysis we will draw on examples from a longitudinal study carried out in France by A. Girard.(1)

a. Starting with their entry into the system - and supposing the chances of entry to be the same - all children will not be identically successful at school. According to their social background some pupils will be eliminated more easily than others; they will have to repeat a class more frequently and their results will systematically be worse in examinations.

In France for instance, it is a fact that on leaving primary school children from varying social backgrounds vary somewhat in age, ranging from an average of 12.57 years for the children of agricultural workers to 11.52 for the children of senior managerial staff (1962 figures, beginning of A. Girard's longitudinal study).(2)

Of the children in the first category only 3% are under 11 years of age (legal age) as opposed to 26% for the children of senior managerial staff, indicating that the discrepancies in the averages correspond to marked

(1) The main results of this investigation have been brought together in the INED publication "Population et l'enseignement", Paris, INED, P.U.F. 1970.

(2) INED, op.cit., p. 205.

differences. These discrepancies, which reflect different rates of progress at school, can be explained by differential repetition rates according to social background.

Table 2 below concerning school results(1) illustrates in a different way the fact that chances of success vary considerably according to social origin.

Table 2. School ratings in CM2 according to socio-occupational group

Socio-occupational group of the head of the family	Excellent and good	Average	Mediocre and bad	Total
Agricultural workers	33	37	30	100
Farmers	43	33	24	100
Workers	35	35	30	100
Tradesmen, craft-tradesmen	44	34	22	100
Employees	45	34	21	100
Managerial staff	64	25	11	100
Industrialists, Professionals	56	33	11	100
Senior managerial staff	62	28	10	100
Together :	41	33	26	100

CM2 = 'cours moyen' = 5th and last year of primary schooling in France.

In the final year of primary schooling, 35% of the children of workers have excellent or good school results as opposed to 62% for the children of senior managerial staff, and this order is inverted for the mediocre or bad rating.

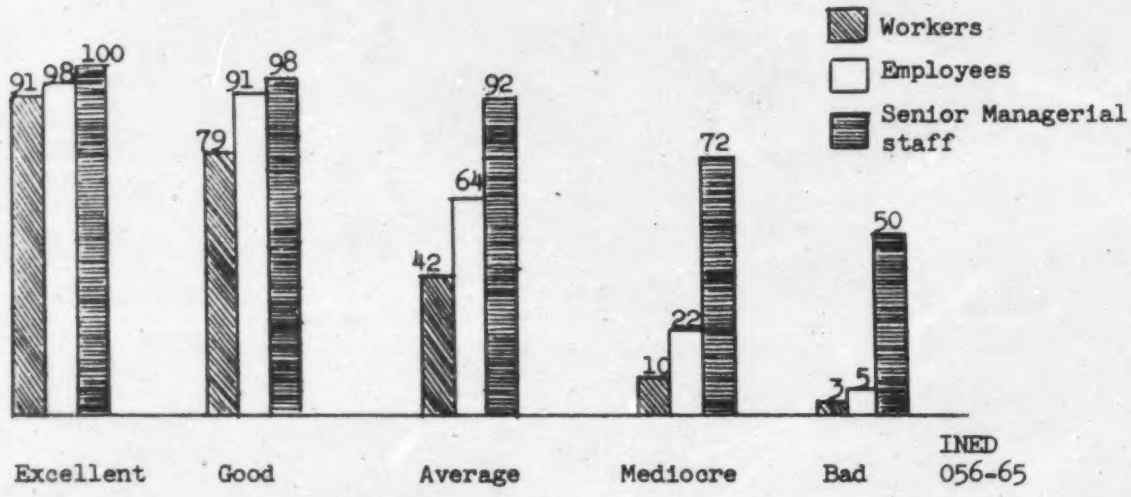
These figures confront us with a sensitive issue. A school which, for reasons of equality, lays down the same syllabus and, theoretically, the same educational treatment for all children leads 'inspite of this', some would say 'because of this', to very unequal results. This problem will be dealt with further on in the analysis of explanatory factors.

(1) INED, op.cit., p. 205.

b. Later on, even given previously equal success, the proportion of pupils in each group which will move on to a higher level of education will not be the same. Some under-privileged categories will bring into play a system of self-elimination either because they do not have sufficient financial means to push their children further, or because their level of aspiration is not high enough.

Graph 2 below(1) illustrates this phenomenon in relation to the transition from primary to secondary schooling in France before the 1963 reform. At that time, the system provided at the end of primary schooling for a choice between an extension of elementary education up until the end of compulsory schooling, or entry into secondary schooling which involved a short cycle of the CEG type (college of general education) or a long cycle of the high school type (lycée), with studies in the humanities or the sciences.

Graph 2. Access to secondary schooling for the children of workers, of employees and of senior managerial staff, according to school results



It will be noted that socio-occupational origin only plays a limited role where excellent or even good school results are concerned, but that this becomes an increasingly important factor of inequality as the results get worse. Thus a child who obtains average results

(1) INED, op.cit., p. 244.

retains all his chances of entering secondary schooling if he is the son of a senior white collar worker, while he does not even retain one chance in two if he is the son of a worker.

c. Furthermore, those children who have not been eliminated at the time of the transition or who have not eliminated themselves, if they belong to these same under-privileged categories, will stand less chance of being oriented towards those streams offering the most educational and occupational opportunities.

Table 3 below(1) shows that just before the reform in France, the children of the upper classes by a large majority choose the high school stream leading directly to university, that the middle classes indifferently choose the long or the short cycle, while the lower classes show a distinct preference for the short cycle.

Table 3. Admittance to '6e' (first year of secondary schooling in France) for 100 children from various social categories

	Not admitted into 6e	High schools (lycées)	C.E.G. (colleges of general education)	Admitted into 6e	Total	Socio-occupational breakdown
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Agricultural workers	68	11	21	32	100	3.4
Self-employed farmers	60	16	24	40	100	15.2
Workers	55	16	29	45	100	39.6
Craft tradesmen and tradesmen	34	32	34	66	100	10.3
Employees	33	33	34	67	100	16.6
Managerial staff	16	55	29	84	100	4.1
Industrialists and large shop-keepers	15	57	28	85	100	3.2
Professions	7	75	18	93	100	
Senior managerial staff	6	75	19	94	100	4.7
Total	45	27	28	55	100	100.0(1)

(1) Including 2.9% without occupation and miscellaneous
6e = first year of secondary education.

(1) INED, op.cit., p. 238.

The mechanisms coming into play here are basically the same as those pointed out at the level of the actual transition. Some categories, the under-privileged ones, resort to self-elimination. They do not send their children to certain levels and types of schooling, even if these children are intellectually capable of pursuing their studies there.

We will analyse the deep-seated reasons underlying this behaviour further on. Suffice it to say here that these reasons may be economic ones, but that they are mainly linked to the cultural context and more particularly to school aspirations which vary considerably with the family environment and which consequently reinforce the inequalities of success noted above.

There is some reason to believe that a third factor indirectly determines a child's chances of transition and orientation. It can be argued that the teacher's idea of the kind of schooling he feels a child is capable of receiving, influences both the child's and the parents' choice. It is difficult to determine the real importance of this factor, but the data given below(1) indicate that, in any case, teachers implicitly take a child's social background into account when coming to an opinion on his future at school.

Social origin is of very little importance where 'excellent' or even 'good' pupils are concerned, but becomes a determining factor in relation to 'mediocre' or 'average' pupils. How can this phenomenon be explained? Is one justified in concluding without further ado that teachers are the victims of social prejudice? Or is one to assume that they feel that under-privileged environments will not be able to compensate for certain school deficiencies (all of them relative ones where average pupils are concerned) to which upper class parents can easily remedy? The fact that family background influences teachers in their opinions, especially where 'average' and 'mediocre' pupils are concerned, gives credence to this assumption. In this case, are their fears realistic or not?

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(1) INED, op.cit., pp. 116-117.

Table 4. Teachers' opinion on pupils' abilities to undertake Secondary schooling ('6e' class or traditional high school) according to school results (1) and by socio-occupational category

	Excellent		Good		Average		Mediocre		Bad	
	6e class	Tradit. high sch.	6e class	Trad. high sch.	6e class	Trad. high sch.	6e class	Trad. high sch.	6e class	Tradit. high sch.
Agricultural workers	91	21	77	13	27	7	2	0	0	0
Self-employed farmers	94	44	75	22	20	3	5	1	2	0
Workers	95	43	79	14	30	2	4	1	1	0
Craftsmen, tradesmen	98	47	86	32	43	7	10	1	3	0
Employees	98	52	86	22	45	5	7	-	1	0
Managerial staff	100	67	93	42	51	10	27	7	2	0
Professions	100	81	96	59	73	27	29	4	5	0
Senior managerial staff	100	82	97	61	78	27	42	11	3	3
Together	97	54	83	25	38	6	6	1	1	-

(1) Teachers had been requested to give an opinion on the kind of schooling they felt each pupil was capable of undertaking in his future at school. This opinion was to be made on the sole basis of school assessment, i.e. irrespective of any other consideration, such as the economic or social position of the parents, or even the school facilities in the locality or region.

We do not have sufficient empirical evidence to reply to these questions. But the disturbing fact remains, that teachers do not seem to base their judgement on academic success alone. The effect this phenomenon may have on the children's future at school is only too clear where teachers play an explicit part in the orientation process.

d. In conclusion, the inequality of participation which can be observed at any given level of education is the combined effect of the inequalities of admission, of success, of transition and of orientation at the preceding levels.

II. EXPLANATORY FACTORS

It is not enough to identify the different dimensions and mechanisms of the inequalities encountered in the educational system. The factors which create and maintain these inequalities must also be explored to ensure that the necessary remedial steps can be taken.

For there is no explanatory value per se in the simple correlation between social stratification and inequality of educational opportunities. Social class is a category of analysis composed of such differing variables as family income, parents' occupation, social prestige, housing conditions, etc. This category is often used in the social sciences because it expresses specific living conditions and hence determines a way of perceiving the world, a system of values, a level of aspirations, in short a specific sub-culture. It is thus important to study in detail, within this synthetic category, those elements which may explain the differences we have observed in school participation, transition, orientation and success.

Needless to say, the influence of these elements may vary considerably according to the level of education and the dimension of the inequality under consideration.

A first variable, which is an integral part of the socio-occupational environment is the economic situation of the family. For a long time prime importance was attached to this factor. It is true that there is a close correlation between social stratification and the income scale and it is easy to note that some lower class families have difficulties in financing the education of their children.

In actual fact, while this factor may partly explain some discrepancies in admittance and orientation, it does not itself influence success, which is more linked to cultural factors. Studies undertaken in France by the 'Institut national d'études démographiques' (National Institute for Demographic Studies) show, for instance, that, in the Paris region, for comparable certificates held by the fathers, there is no correlation between the income and school results of the child, but that given comparable incomes, there is a correlation between the father's certificate or even the duration of his studies and school results.(1) Table 5 below illustrates this correlation.

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(1) Clerc, P., "La famille et l'orientation scolaire au niveau de la sixième, enquête de juin 1963 dans l'agglomération parisienne", in INED, "Population et l'enseignement", Paris, PUF, 1970, pp. 143-188.

Table 5. Pupils in CM2 with 'excellent' and 'good' results, according to the income of the household and the father's certificate, 1962

Father's certificate	Overall (1)	Monthly income in francs: 400 to 1,000	1,001 to 1,400	1,401 to 2,000	2,001 and over
No certificate	38	42	36	42	...
Primary school certificate	39	40	37	46	43
Diplomas of technical education	47	28	44	52	42
First cycle schooling certificate	63	55	63	60	54
School leaving certificate and beyond	68	...	65	68	65
Overall	48	39	43	53	59

... non significant figures.

(1) Including non-declared income.

CM2 = Fifth and last year of elementary schooling in France.

The problem of inequality seems thus to crystallize at the very deepest level of social reality, namely that of culture. Seen as a set of values, standards and symbols, the cultural heritage varies from one social group to another and largely determines the categories of thought, the aspirations and attitudes of members of society. But this does not explain what mediating processes create the link between cultural inequalities amongst the parents and educational inequalities amongst their children.

This is indeed a difficult problem, not only because categories of thought, attitudes and aspirations are complex and little known entities, but also because their links with education are never simple ones but mutually interacting.

In a recent publication, P. Perrenoud puts forward an analytical division of the cultural heritage into different levels, making a distinction between the cognitive field and the field of attitudes.(1)

(1) Perrenoud, P., Stratification socio-culturelle et réussite scolaire, les defaillances de l'explication causale, Droz, Geneva, 1970.

Cognitive	Attitudes
- Level of logico-syntactic structures	- Level of the basic personality
- Level of mental habits and of models of implicit thought	- Level of the ethos as an implicit set of values and attitudes
- Level of specific cultural contents	- Level of specific values and attitudes relating to school, of the criteria and ways of achieving social success

This division will serve as the basis of our analysis, assuming, for the purposes of the analysis, that for each of these levels there is a type of differentiated socialisation which takes place before or during school learning and which determines educational inequalities.

The development of unconscious logico-syntactic structures in the child has been widely studied and researched by many, including the Swiss psychologist, J. Piaget. This research has revealed that the process whereby intelligence and language are formed, which begins at birth or even before, reaches a state of equilibrium during adolescence, having passed through successive ordered stages (five according to Piaget). It is also generally accepted that rates of development vary up to as much as one or two years. Insofar as delays are related to socio-cultural factors and show a correlation with social stratification, it is easy to see that they have a direct effect on success at school, particularly at the primary level.

But what in fact determines the differences in the cognitive development of children? In his book The relevance of education (1972)(1), the American psychologist J.S. Bruner comes to the conclusion that these differences are primarily linked to the way in which parents intervene in the child's activities and more particularly, in its way of seeking goals and of solving problems. Research undertaken in the USA has revealed that in this country middle-class mothers behave in a distinctly different way from mothers from under-privileged environments. The former more readily encourage their children to be involved in a continuous flow of activities

(1) Bruner, J.S., The relevance of education, London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1972, pp. 132-161.

directed towards precise goals, they allow them to set their own goals and to proceed at their own pace, they intervene less directly in the problem solving, ask more questions, react more readily to the successes of their children than to their failures, etc. It is understandable that these different models of interaction within the family should influence the rate and quality of the child's cognitive development. Familiarity with these models and with the key factors determining the level of logical structures becomes all the more important when envisaging the development of pre-school education.

However, success of backwardness at school do not solely depend on a child's level of intelligence, but also on its fundamental attitudes. Social psychologists would say on its basic personality. Psychologists have concentrated in particular on the notion of achievement motive. This term refers to the valorisation of individual or collective success outside the framework of any socially organised system of rewards. It would appear that, as in the case of cognitive development, the internalisation of this value is closely linked to the family's capacity to educate, to the degree of security and autonomy experienced by the children through their relationships with their parents. There is no doubt, for instance, that in certain extreme situations families can be locked into some sort of situational fatalism which they communicate to their children. Nor is there any doubt that this attitude is more pronounced when rapid urbanisation is taking place and that it can even reach in certain cases the stage of a refusal of 'society' and of its institutions, including the school.

A more precise definition has yet to be given of what these significantly different models of family education are and of the exact influence of the achievement motive on school careers. While it is easy to elaborate a certain number of explanatory theories and assumptions, little empirical evidence has in fact been provided on these two points.

Another factor of inequality is to be found on the level of the implicit languages and models of thought, specific to each social environment. The best-known theory on linguistic sub-cultures and their links with the class structure was developed by the British sociologist B. Bernstein (1961).(1) It gave rise to a series of investigations which provide us with a better understanding of the handicaps experienced by certain categories of children when confronted with the kind of language used in teaching at school.

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(1) Bernstein, B., Class, codes and control, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, Vol. I, Theoretical studies towards a sociology of language, 1971; Vol. II, Applied studies towards a sociology of language, 1973.

What is the essence of this theory? First and foremost, it in no way suggests that some social classes speak a different and more elementary language than others, but rather that their way of using the same language differs. Bernstein proceeds to distinguish between two linguistic codes: a restricted code, characterized by a limited selection of syntactic and lexical alternatives and an elaborated code providing a wide selection of these same alternatives. Use of one or other of the codes depends on the specific forms taken by social relationships. The main difference between the restricted code, specific to working class environments, and the elaborated code, the privilege of the upper classes, hinges basically on the capacity for abstraction in relation to the immediate context of use. Only the elaborated code gives access to communication with universalistic orders of meaning, one which is not tied to a real situation and in which the principles and factors governing the relations between objects and persons are made explicit.

The differences between these two codes can be measured by such variables as the degree of complexity and subordination of the clauses frequency in use of conjunctions, adverbs, certain pronouns, etc.

However, the fact that a child has been socialised within a restricted code which gives access to particularistic orders of meaning, in no way means that he will be incapable of using an elaborated code from time to time. All will depend on the circumstances. For, as Bernstein explains, the school, which is necessarily interested in the transmission and development of messages of a universalistic kind, rarely also sets up the learning conditions which would make it easier for the under-privileged child to have access to these messages.

> "But if the contexts of learning, the examples, the reading books, are not contexts which are triggers for the children's imaginings, are not triggers on the children's curiosity and explorations in his family and community, then the child is not at home in the educational world ... Much of the contexts of our schools are unwittingly drawn from aspects of the symbolic world of the middle class, and so when the child steps into school he is stepping into a symbolic system which does not provide for him a linkage with his life outside."(1)

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(1) Bernstein, B., op.cit., Vol. I, p. 199.

In short, as the linguistic capital of children from lower class backgrounds has not been valorized in school terms, communication with them of an instructional nature is deformed and their capacity to study is consequently diminished.

While giving a more radical interpretation of inequality of a linguistic kind, some writers such as in France, P. Bourdieu and J.C. Passeron(1), who speak in terms of an opposition between the bourgeois language of the school and the popular one, have added another dimension to this inequality. They stress the existence of distances, of contradictions even, between the ethos of the school and that of certain social groups. Here ethos is intended to refer to an implicit system of values governing the normative orientations and behaviour of members of society and is part of the culture. As we indicated above, it would appear that the school is closer to the culture of the upper classes. If this is so, it would be putting the children of the lower classes at a double disadvantage: not only would they be very unfamiliar with the models of thought used in teaching, but moreover they would not be familiar with the attitudes and orientations which it expects from them.(2) In the sociologists' jargon: formal education for them is more a process of acculturation than one of enculturation.

A few lines by the English sociologist, J. Floud, will help illustrate this theory(3):

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(1) Bourdieu, P. and Passeron, J.C., Les héritiers : les étudiants et la culture, Paris, Editions de Minuit, 1964.

Bourdieu, P. and Passeron, J.C., La reproduction : éléments pour une théorie du système d'enseignement, Paris, Editions de Minuit, 1970.

(2) There is a fascinating, concrete illustration of this problem in a book written by a group of pupils: Letter to a teacher, Vintage Books, New York, 1970 (by the pupils of the School of Barbiana)(Original Italian version, 1967).

(3) Floud, J., "Homes and schools and the problem of educability", in Halsey, A.H. (ed.), Ability and educational opportunity, OECD, 1963, p. 35, quoted in Perrenoud, op.cit., pp. 34-35.

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> "Teachers may take for granted and find it reasonable to demand of all children the social equipment with which the average middle-class child tends to come to school; a certain capacity to assume responsibility, a relative independence of mind and breadth of interests. They may demand assumptions about life on the part of their pupils which are in fact 'middle-class' assumptions; such as that life is one long progress towards ever deferred gratifications; that the present is always at a discount and the future at a premium; that one must always have a career rather than a job; that the popular pleasures purveyed by the mass media are at best worthless and at worst sinful."

Like all investigations into attitudes, that on the theory of the distances between class and school ethos raises complex technical problems. In the present state of affairs, it can be said that this theory provides a likely assumption for explaining some of the aspects of educational inequality. However, the nature of these cultural distances in each specific context and the way in which they affect success at school has yet to be studied in greater detail.

A more explicit level of cultural heritage and one which it is theoretically easier to analyse, is that of specific contents and attitudes. It is obvious that explicit cultural contents vary from one social group to another and it may be accepted that any knowledge, especially aesthetic or literary, picked up by the children of certain types of surroundings are closer to the contents of the curricula than that picked up by other children. Nevertheless, we still know very little about the exact effect such explicit knowledge acquired out of school has on success at school. In an attempt to measure this influence indirectly, several investigators have introduced into their models of analysis such explanatory variables as the number of books to be found in a family, the presence of newspapers, radio or television, the participation of the children in travel, etc. These studies are generally not very conclusive. It is, however, possible to state that inequalities in cultural endowment, with which the well-known 'cultural poverty' is sometimes identified, are not the most important ones when explanations of the differences in success at school are involved.

Specific attitudes towards school and social success, on the contrary, do represent an essential variable. All research done in developed countries indicates that the school and vocational aspirations of the parents, and subsequently of the children(1) are very closely in line with the pattern of social stratification.

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(1) It is generally accepted that the aspirations of the parents are not taken over by the child before the age of ten. It is at that stage that it starts to form a realistic idea of its future.

Most sociologists take some theory on reference groups as a starting point for explaining this phenomenon. According to this theory, each individual looks firstly at those in the same social position as himself and thus intuitively internalises the objective chances of school and vocational promotion in the form of 'subjective hopes'. He would thus be constantly and subconsciously adjusting his absolute aspirations and real expectations.

Whatever the explanatory value of this theory, it is obvious that differences of aspiration largely determine inequalities of transition and orientation. For, as we have seen above, the very low school and vocational projects of the lower classes lead to self-elimination which can neither be explained by differences in success, nor even by a lack of financial resources.

But an explanatory value can undoubtedly be attributed to these mobility projects and general attitude towards education as regards success at school, precisely to the extent to which they may determine the motivation to learn. An investigation undertaken by Mrs. Fraser in Scotland supports this assumption. As Table 6 below shows, of the independent variables taken to characterize the family environment, encouragement by parents as the concrete expression of the importance they attach to the child's studies shows the highest level of correlation not only with I.Q. but also with children's results at school.(1)

All the explanatory factors we have analysed to date are linked to the child's original environment. However, school itself can be a cause of inequality. Some of the aspects of this problem are immediately apparent and for such aspects there is no need for highly sophisticated research to draw up a strategy of equality of opportunity. In general, it revolves around all those variables which relate to the morphology and structure of the school system: differences in the distance between school and home, in the state of buildings and equipment, in the availability and quality of teaching means, in the structure and in the curricula, in the teachers'

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(1) Fraser, E., "Home environment and the school", London, University of London Press, 1959, Investigation quoted in Husén, Torsten, Social background and educational career, Paris, OECD, 1972, pp. 144-146.

Table 6. Correlations between environmental indicators on the one hand and I.Q. and school marks on the others, among secondary school students in Aberdeen

Environmental indicator	I.Q.	Criterion (scaled school marks)
Parental education	0.42	0.49
Parental book reading	0.28	0.33
Parental magazine and newspaper reading	0.38	0.40
Income	0.35	0.44
Family size	- 0.40	- 0.46
Living space	0.36	0.45
Parental attitude towards education	0.30	0.39
Parental encouragement	0.60	0.66
General impression of home	0.39	0.46
Self-environmental indicators (multiple correlation)	0.69	0.75

Source: Fraser, 1959; N = 408.

qualifications. In many countries the schooling available in rural zones or in the poor areas of a town is only too inadequate when compared with that available in urban centres. People in rural areas and in marginal city areas systematically have the poorest schools, are sent the least qualified teachers and have the most rudimentary teaching equipment. In cases such as these, the school obviously reinforces the handicaps arising out of the child's original environment.

Other factors, linked to the running of the school, are much more subtle and more difficult to analyse. For, under the appearance of equality (standardised examination system, standard curricula, homogeneous teaching body, etc.) schools can, by their organisation, their general atmosphere, and the attitude of teachers be responsible for very unequal treatment.

A point of great interest to researchers is the extent to which the behaviour and expectations of teachers concerning their pupils were able to influence the latters' school results.(1) Although work is not yet sufficiently advanced to produce reliable and precise conclusions, there are several elements indicating that this influence may indeed be far greater than might be thought at first sight.

One particular study, entitled Pygmalion in the classroom (1968) caused a certain stir in the education world.(2) The authors, R.A. Rosenthal and L. Jacobson, attempt to show that teachers' prejudices concerning their pupils' performances can become self-fulfilling prophecies. In simple terms their thesis is as follows: if a teacher believes that a pupil is 'gifted', the pupil stands a far greater chance of obtaining good results, while on the contrary, if a teacher is convinced that a pupil is not 'gifted', the latter may well do poorly. This investigation is obviously not exhaustive and is still prompting reactions and criticisms.(3) For instance, it gives no explanation of the way in which this mechanism adapting the teachers' expectations and the pupils' results might operate. However, if these conclusions were reinforced by further research of this type they would be certain to influence education policies, in particular in the fields of teacher training, teaching methods and class composition.

In his book Expectation and pupil performance (1970), D.A. Pidgeon(4) starts from this theory that one of the most important factors determining teachers' expectations is their conviction that it is innate capacities which primarily determine school results. He explains how this theory is at the base of the selective system which places pupils in homogeneous classes according to their capacities and puts forward the assumption that such a system can only widen the gap between the most gifted and the least gifted pupils as teachers will expect performances corresponding to the supposed capacities of the group.

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(1) Rosenshine, B., Teaching behaviours and student achievement, Windsor, Berks., National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales, 1971 (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, IFA studies no. 1).

(2) Rosenthal, R.A. and Jacobson, L., Pygmalion in the classroom, 1968.

(3) See articles in different educational reviews, in particular Harvard Educational Review, Interchange and American Educational Research Journal.

(4) Pidgeon, D.A., Expectation and pupil performance, Stockholm, Almquist and Wiksell, 1970 (Stockholm studies in educational psychology, 18).

The fact, for instance, that in the IEA study the typical discrepancies in the results of tests in England are systematically greater than in other countries would be explained by the selective character of the English system based on the homogeneous grouping of pupils and by the corresponding philosophy of the 'innate gift' which is very widespread amongst the teaching body.

These indications do not amount to a formal proof of the influence of teachers' expectations on their pupils. They do, however, invite reflection on certain traditional methods of grouping of our pupils, especially considering that the distribution of school results generally shows a close correlation with social stratification.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The purpose of this paper was to establish a reference framework for considering inequality of educational opportunities. Studies undertaken to date have given us a good idea of the mechanisms of this inequality. The explanatory factors, on the contrary, are far less well known and research in this field has provided us with a body of provisional and limited assumptions rather than definitive results which could be generalised. But isn't the role of research in the social sciences often and above all to make the complexity of a problem better understood and to systematise our model of analysis rather than to present knowledge which is definitive and certain? In this way research on inequalities has been fruitful as it has made us evolve from an essentially static and global approach to a dynamic, multi-dimensional conception.

Our analysis was able to show the necessity of clearly identifying, on every occasion, the dimensions under consideration (entrance, transition, orientation, success) of analysing their multiple interactions in time and of examining the relative importance of explanatory factors in relation to each of these dimensions. Family income, for instance, can partly determine inequality of entrance and orientation; they are of little direct importance when explaining inequalities of success. It is important to be aware of the complexity of the phenomenon when attempting to devise an adequate strategy for coping with it.

The analysis model presented here is mainly based on research undertaken in a few western countries. These countries possess social structures by now well established and of a specific kind. There is, however, no certainty whatsoever that the problem arises in the same terms in other societies with different social systems. To begin with, some thought should be given to the way in which contexts may vary when referring to the possibility of conflict between the ethos of certain social groups and that of the school in a society where school is an imported product, or of the distances between the language of teaching and that of the home in a multilinguistic society or even of the relative effect of school aspirations on orientation in a younger and more mobile society. Each of these cases would necessitate specific investigations in which the theory and method presented here could only be used as a guide for analysis.

Finally, this paper should logically end with some consideration of the means and strategies for achieving democratisation. Given the scope of this subject, it will be dealt with at a later date in another document.